

[theatre]

They're lining up at seaside playhouse

by Jim Seavor

“I hope I get it.”

That's the opening song in *A Chorus Line*, the award-winning musical now at the Theatre-by-the-Sea, and what the dancers are hoping for is a job. It's easy to feel for them — they are desperate to find work and that's something we know far too much about these days.

But it's not just the money they need. They need to do what they love, what they live for and that's dance. They're auditioning for eight places in a chorus line — eight faceless places where the slightest sign of individuality will not be allowed. They must become one. The chorus will be there to make the star look good, and that is all.

The program at the Theatre-by-the-Sea lists 26 roles. That is quickly cut to about 17 and

finally to the eight who will go on dancing.

A Chorus Line was originally conceived, directed and choreographed by Michael Bennett who wanted to salute the people behind the anonymous unity. He talked with dancers and used their stories as the basis for his characters. *A Chorus Line* opened in 1975 and ran for 15 years.

It's still dancing.

And it's dancing well at the Theatre-by-the-Sea.

It was directed and choreographed by Mitzi Hamilton who stuck closely to Bennett's choreography. Hamilton's story inspired Val (Dance: Ten; Looks: Three). She's the one who could not get a job until she made some “adjustments” to her appearance.

At the old barn, Emmett Louise Smith is a delightful Val.

Matunuck's producing artistic director Aimee Turner makes her Rhode Island acting debut as

Cassie, the dancer who was a star but is now desperate for a place in the line. Turner has a strong background in theatre both on Broadway and on tour and she's retained her high kicks.

Cassie was suggested in part by the life of Donna McKechnie, who originated the role.

Her life also inspired the role of Maggie, one of those who sing about how life was beautiful — *At The Ballet*.

The character of Paul is based on the life of Nicholas Dante, one of the show's authors.

Yamil DeJesus stands out as Paul, who is the only one who tells his story alone on stage without bursting into song and dance. It's a moving tale of a boy discovering himself, being ridiculed for being gay and finally how his parents discovered his sexuality. His first steps into a world in which he was



not yet comfortable came as a “pony” in *The Jewel Box Review*. Yes, the review was real. It was a touring drag show which would occasionally play theatres but also performed in homes in areas where drag was illegal.

Caroline Cuseo stands out as the sarcastic and cynical Sheila, who bolsters her style with cigarettes and pills.

Tom Berklund takes control of Zach, the director-choreographer holding the auditions. Zach

is hard on the dancers; with just a hint now and then there could be a sympathetic side. He controls things from the rear of the theater, his voice booming out like some annoyed god. He and Cassie had a past together and the relationship is coloring his decision if she will make the cut. That's just about all the plot in *A Chorus Line*. The emphasis is firmly on the dancers and the final image shows the music and dancing will not stop.

It's a powerful one.

After 50 years, Kay manages *Other People's Money*

by Robert Barossi

There are two sides to every story. Most stories actually have many more sides than just two. Theatre often provides the opportunity to look at a situation from a number of different angles and perhaps see a problem from a new or different perspective. Little Theatre of Fall River hopes for this with their upcoming production of the play *Other People's Money*.

Director Stephen Kay has been a member of Little Theatre for over 50 years. He says he has directing so many shows that he's “lost count of the number of plays I've directed.”

A few notables he mentions include *Angel Street* and *The*

OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY

Little Theatre of Fall River
The Fire Barn, 340 Prospect St,
Fall River (Corner of Prospect St
and Highland Ave

Runs June 17-20, 24-27

www.littletheatre.net

Tale of the Allergists Wife.

Other People's Money was submitted by Kay as a suggestion for this season. He says, “This is a play I thought I'd like to do. I saw it in the late 80s but with economy the way it is right now, people losing jobs, the markets are a mess, I thought, maybe this play will be very timely right now.”

Written in 1989 by Jerry

Stern, it won the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play. The plot centers on a corporate raider from Wall Street who sets his sights on New England Wire and Cable, a company outside of Providence which employs 1,200 local people. Lawrence Garfinkle, or “Larry the Liquidator,” as he is known, believes he can buy the company and then liquidate its assets, making himself a large profit. He is opposed in his efforts by Wire and Cable's chairman, who has been with the company since it started, and a New York City lawyer hired to stop the takeover.

According to Kay, audiences should keep an open mind, not passing judgment or deciding right away that anyone is the

villain. “Is it really the owners fault for trying to hold onto the company that is losing money? Is it fair to the stockholders to keep supporting this arm of the company that is failing and losing money?”

Kay believes the play's central struggle is a power play between the “Wall Street-type” who “does this for a business, to try to make a big profit” and the small-business owner who “wants to keep the jobs, so it's important to him to keep the business running.” He describes it has a back-and-forth fight where the audience is not sure who is going to win.

“It's also not a heavy drama,” he says. “It's not a Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller kind of play. There is a lot of humor, lots of light moments, both sides

of the power play shoot barbs at each other which are humorous. It isn't heavy but it is thought provoking.” There is even some romance when Larry becomes romantically involved with the lawyer hired to thwart his plans.

Kay hopes audiences will really think about who is responsible for the economic situations of the play and why people, whether corporate raiders or small business owners, do what they do. He says, “At the end of the play, maybe they will look at stock brokers and liquidators as not necessarily the villain. Is the liquidator the bad guy, is it always Wall Street's fault? Many say it's all black and white, it's always Wall Street, but who else might be at fault?”